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WRITTEN STATEMENT OF  
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COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

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## **Introduction**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee. The theme of the oversight hearing, “Transit Zone Operations, Can We Sustain Record Seizures with Declining Resources?” is especially timely. Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South challenges drug traffickers in the air and on the high seas 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in defense of America’s borders. We are relentless in attacking the shipment of illegal drugs and narco-traffickers themselves. Our goal is to put drug traffickers at risk of interdiction and arrest each and every step of their journey. We work very hard in constant support of law enforcement to ensure this all occurs seamlessly with the least amount of resources. Through better intelligence, expanded law enforcement partnerships and the collective efforts of the counterdrug community, JIATF South has been able to support ever-increasing cocaine disruptions for the last six years with 2005 being a record all time high of approximately 252 metric tons. While we are currently on track to exceed the 2005 record disruptions, we are challenged by trafficker reactions to increased losses and the impact that has on the effectiveness of assets assigned to support JIATF South operations.

### **Joint Interagency Task Force South is a National Task Force**

JIATF South was created specifically to address the south to north flow of drugs towards the United States from South America. Its roots go back to 1989 when the Department of Defense was congressionally directed as ‘the lead agency’ for the detection and monitoring (D&M) of drug trafficking events in support of law enforcement. Over time, additional, but appropriate, missions and functions were added to the command’s responsibilities. It has taken 17 years to evolve to where we are today, an international, interagency organization that is

specifically charged to D&M the south to north flow of illicit trafficking, all executed under a single director.

There are significant strengths that make JIATF South as successful as it is today. Perhaps most noteworthy is that we are optimally designed and organized for success against the asymmetrical threat of drug trafficking. The National Interdiction Command and Control Plan (NICCP) created JIATF South as a 'national task force' and intentionally not as a department or agency task force. This fundamental premise was reaffirmed with the interagency signing the latest iteration of the NICCP dated 1 September 2005. We are assigned to the Commander, USSOUTHCOM yet we are not a classic military component of the combatant commander. The national task force concept aggressively creates mutually supporting efforts among its diverse personnel, agencies and countries. The JIATF organizational structure embodies the force-multiplier effect of a task force manned and led by personnel from the various agencies and countries with a counterdrug mission.

### **Drug Trafficking Organizations**

Drug trafficking organizations and the drug traffickers themselves pose a wide-ranging threat to our country. Their illicit activities include the production and movement of drugs and often include the movement of arms for terrorists - which are paid for by the profit from or the exchange for drugs. Drug trafficking organizations are usually a close-knit group, often involving family members and are exceptionally difficult to penetrate. They are well funded; in 2004, the U.N. estimated the drug trade to be a \$320 billion a year industry and cocaine accounts for approximately \$70 billion of the total. With funds of this magnitude, they can afford to buy the latest technology and strong political influence within our theater. Finally, drug traffickers

have at their disposal the use of various types of conveyances and modalities to smuggle drugs. The concealment of drugs is only limited by imagination.

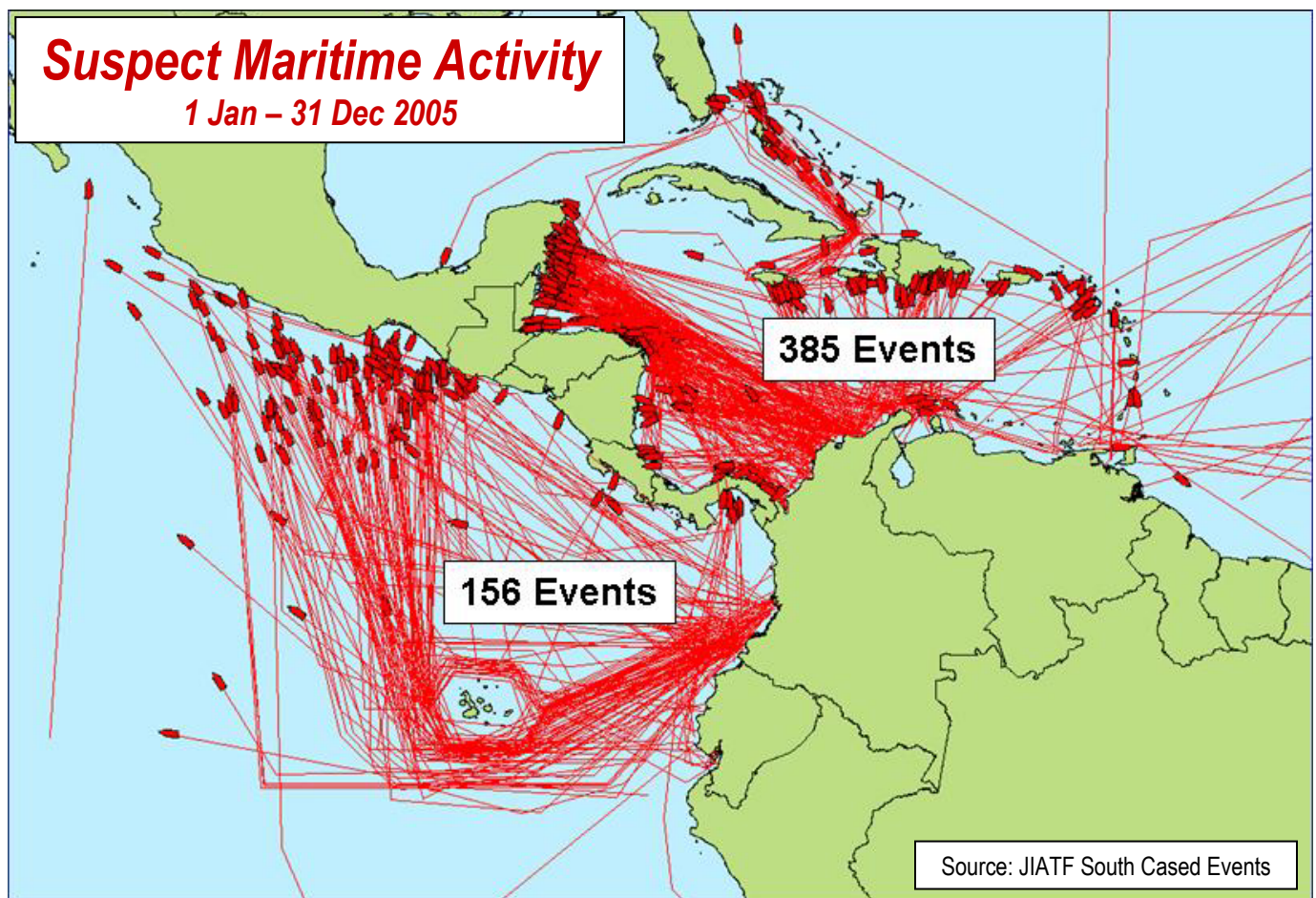
While there is considerable interagency and international discussion on just how much cocaine is moved within any year, all agree that cocaine is still moved in quantities far in excess of what our respective law enforcement forces interdict. Drug traffickers will collectively attempt to produce and ship enough drugs to account for drug losses (seizures plus disruptions); the costs of corruption, money laundering, security, services (paid in cocaine) as well as consumption (end use) to ensure enough cocaine reaches world market to satisfy the demand. Our cocaine movement forecast for calendar year 2006 is based on historical information of seizures, disruptions, and high and low confidence intelligence. For 2006, JIATF South forecasts that approximately 583 metric tons will transit up the Eastern Pacific, Central America and Western Caribbean corridor (the biggest threat vector; accounts for about 83% of all cocaine movement to the U.S.); 120 metric tons will transit the Central and Eastern Caribbean corridor to the U.S. and approximately 367 metric tons will initially transit through the Eastern Pacific and the Caribbean to non-U.S. markets. In total, approximately 1070 metric tons of cocaine will potentially leave the landmass of South America in 2006.

### **Drug Movement in the Transit Zone**

During CY 2005, the interagency identified, through high and low confidence intelligence sources, 514 maritime non-commercial cocaine smuggling events and 157 aerial events originating in South America (numbers extracted from the interagency Consolidated Counterdrug Database or CCDB). If all of these events were disrupted, it would have totaled over 1000 metric tons of cocaine. This amount far exceeds the amount actually disrupted in the transit zone - approximately 246.6 metric tons. Of this transit zone disruption total, JIATF South

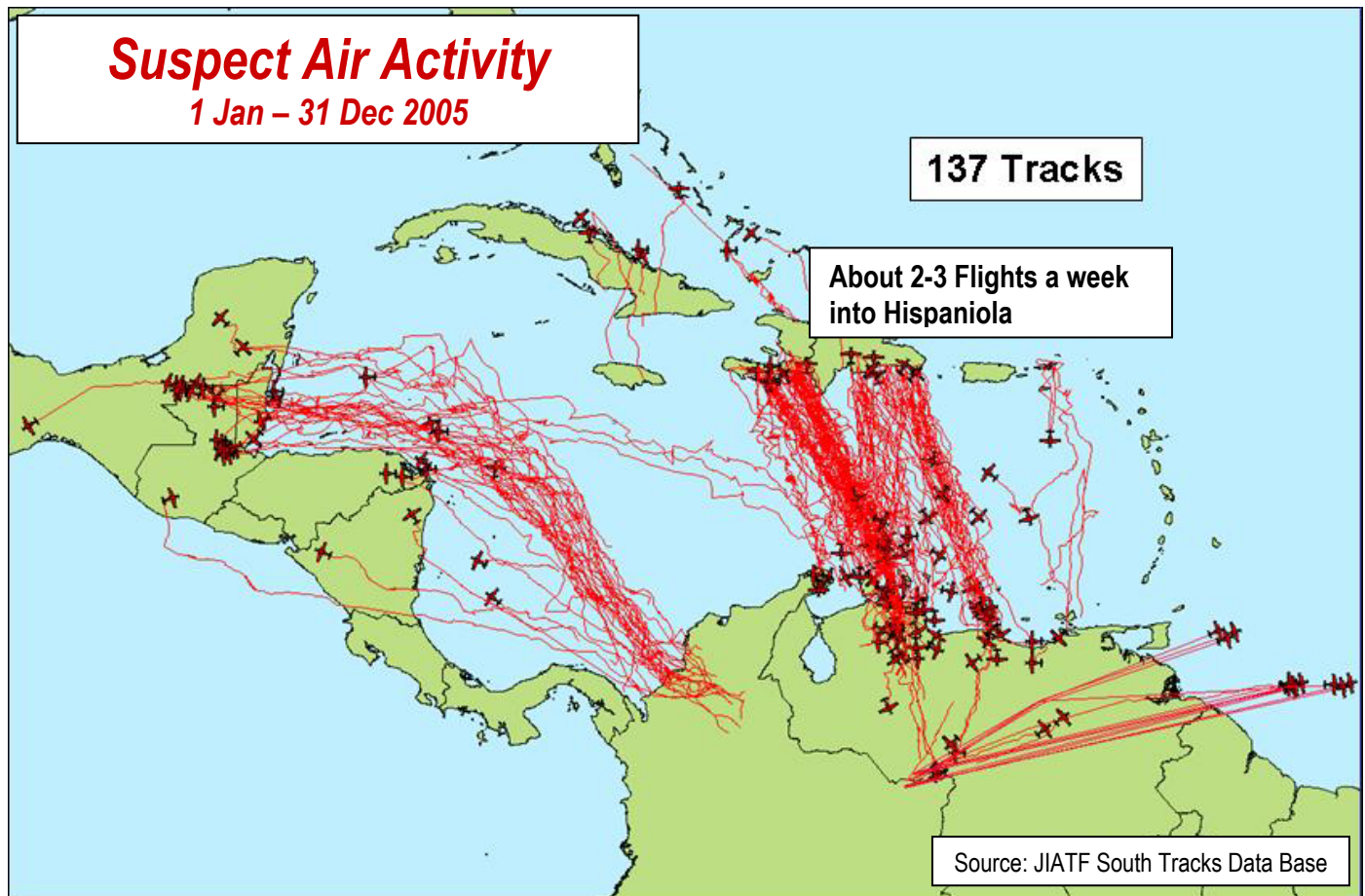
directly supported the disruption of 206.4 metric tons (this excludes the source zone). Put another way, JIATF South supported 84% of all non-commercial, transit zone primary flow cocaine disruptions. Viewing the disruptions through another lens, the total worldwide disruption of all cocaine amounted to 537.8 metric tons and the overall 252 metric tons (transit zone and source zone) JIATF South supported represents 46% of this worldwide total.

As graphically depicted below, the vast majority of drug movement towards the United States - as well as most other end-use markets - is a two-stage process. Additionally, the preponderance of suspected drug trafficking events has as their initial destination of the northern portion of Central America - the southern portion of Mexico.



Note: of the tracks above, 60% are Go-Fasts; 35% are Fishing Vessels; and 5% are Other (sailing boats, private yacht, etc).

The two-step / staging process drug trafficker's use to transit drugs is also reflected in the suspected air traffic:



The above two slides highlight the suspected primary flow of cocaine. The level of knowledge of the secondary flow - how the traffickers continue to move the cocaine after making initial landfall - is not well known.

## **Interagency and International Personnel**

The personnel structure of the JIATF South Team is unique and a major contributor to our successes. We are as much international as we are interagency in composition. We have representatives from the Air Forces of Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru and Venezuela; the Navies of Colombia, France, Mexico, Netherlands and the United Kingdom; a representative from the Brazilian Intelligence Agency and a liaison officer from the Spanish Guardia Civil. We have representatives from all Services of Department of Defense; Homeland Security provides U.S. Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection personnel; and DEA and FBI personnel represent the Justice Department contribution. Additionally, all the three letter intelligence codes from Washington, D.C.; NSA, DIA, CIA, NGA, and the NRO have operational personnel embedded in the JIATF South team. An invaluable component is the DOD civilians and contract personnel - all subject matter experts that provide the continuity and backbone for our efforts. This broad spectrum of skill sets come together with one common objective: supporting our D&M mission. It is important to note that the interagency has personnel here not only in senior liaison officer positions, but also in positions that are fully integrated into the staff and empowered to make decisions to execute our D&M mission. To cite a few examples, the US Coast Guard provides the Director; a Vice Director is from CBP, our Deputy Director for Intelligence is from DEA and our Deputy Director for Operations is from Customs and Border Protection, our 24x7 watch floor is manned with DOD, USCG and CBP personnel.

## **Intelligence**

Intelligence is the crown jewel of our national task force and it would not be immodest to say - for the entire counterdrug community. There is no other counterdrug intelligence

organization anywhere that has the breadth, depth, singular focus and synergy found at JIATF South. All-source intelligence fusion and analysis drives our operations and scheme of maneuver. We have a great many sources of information but by far our most critical input comes from U.S. and Partner Nation Law Enforcement. This information is fused with all-source intelligence, analyzed and sanitized as necessary, then aggressively disseminated to our tactical forces - U.S. and our allies.

It is of particular importance to note the extraordinary contribution the JIATF South Tactical Analysis Teams (TAT's). Located in many of the U.S. Embassies, the TAT personnel work closely with the Drug Enforcement Agents within the respective country to glean the tactically actionable information needed to cue the D&M forces. A TAT is modest in size, typically composed of two members. There are currently TATs deployed to 16 countries. In Central America, there are permanent TAT's in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Panama. Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Belize have temporary TATs. The U.S. Country Teams recognize extraordinary value of this resource and the demand for them is very high. We have approval to expand existing TAT support in three countries; to send a TAT to two new countries; and have pending requests for yet another five country teams. Funding constraints will dictate how quickly additional TATs can be deployed. Additionally, JIATF South mans and operates the Intelligence Analysis Center (IAC) in Mexico City, Mexico. Similar in function to the TAT's, it is more robust and addresses the international air and maritime illicit targets entering Mexico. The TAT/IAC program is a model where a very modest investment of personnel and equipment pays big dividends for everyone.

Another program that has paid extraordinary dividends is Panama Express (PANEX). Operating from two locations in Florida, PANEX North and South focuses on the Caribbean and



Eastern Pacific respectively. Each component has representatives from all of the U.S. Law Enforcement Agencies and concentrates on developing actionable intelligence to better cue our interdiction efforts. It is no accident that we have had successively increasing disruptions totals over the last 6 years - the information from PANEX has been fundamental to JIATF South's continued disruption successes.

Our intelligence is good and getting better by the day. The creative and innovative application of all our intelligence resources is absolutely cutting-edge. However, cueing us that a drug trafficking event is about to take place is not the same as having the fore-knowledge of when and where the drugs departed, what route the traffickers will take, the speed and direction they will travel or the final destination of the drugs. It is quite rare that we have this level of detail on a drug movement. It is worth noting that even the trafficking organizations can't ensure the departure, speed, direction, and delivery of their shipments. Drug traffickers are extremely furtive by nature and will go to amazing lengths not to be caught. While we are at times able to employ technical intelligence ingeniously in order to generally locate targets, the sizable area that we need to monitor still makes this a challenging task.

Herein lies the crux of the problem to be solved; the ability of the United States and its allies to D&M (find, sort, track, and handoff for interdiction) the initial movement of cocaine in the air (representing about 10% of the total volume) and on the high seas (representing about 90% of the total volume) in order to effectively disrupt the drug's transit. The cocaine flow estimations cited earlier can be translated into expected drug trafficking events. For CY 2006, we expect 230 to 250 smuggling events by go-fast vessels, 140 to 160 fishing vessel events, and 110 to 130 aircraft flights. A go-fast boat is by far the hardest target to find and collectively they represent our greatest maritime threat.

## **Command and Control**

The next core competency I would like to address is our ability to command and control our assigned and apportioned forces through a tremendously large Joint Operating Area of approximately 42 million square miles. We are nationally tasked to coordinate and de-conflict all D&M counterdrug operations. On any given day, we are controlling the U.S. and international contributions of 10 to 12 ships and 6 to 10 air sorties. This all takes place in our Joint Operations Center (JOC). The JOC has communications with all assets under our tactical control. Additionally, the JOC fuses multiple sources of radar, such as Relocatable Over-The-Horizon Radar (ROTHR), U.S. and allied ground based radars (GBR) located in both the source and transit zones and radar data from U.S. and allied ships and aircraft to form a single, fully integrated air picture. This radar picture is then exported to a great number of customers within the United States military and law enforcement agencies and as appropriate, to our allies.

Conducting effective operations with forces this diverse requires a common set of standing operating procedures (SOP). One of the most powerful, but often unseen aspects of this command is that all of the contributing services, agencies and countries leave their respective asset employment doctrine at the door as they enter the building. Over the years, the interagency and international partners at JIATF South have established and continually refine a common set of mutually agreed tactics, techniques, and procedures to ensure all forces are fully coordinated, integrated, synchronized and employed to the best possible effect.

The common operating picture, or COP, previously mentioned is also very important. We utilize real time location inputs from all of the U.S. assets and those from our allies in order to generate a complete picture of all friendly forces operating within our Joint Operating Area. The COP also highlights the current targets of interest being tracked. The COP is disseminated

over various secure communication systems to U.S. military and law enforcement forces and as appropriate, to our allied forces. It is with the COP that we ensure that all participants have a clear understanding of the current operational picture.

### **Deliberate Planning**

The last core competency I would like to address is deliberate planning. JIATF South is nationally chartered to provide regional counterdrug D&M planning support to the interagency and partner nations; we expend considerable effort meeting this important requirement. The breadth and depth of the counterdrug skill sets on our planning staff are found nowhere else. Our planning staff works directly with Ambassadors and our country teams downrange. Through the country teams, we integrate partner nations' counterdrug efforts with JIATF South. At any one time throughout the year, one or two bilateral or multilateral counterdrug operations is underway within JIATF South's JOA - which uniquely encompasses the entire SOUTHCOM AOR, as well as portions of the AORs of EUCOM, PACOM, and NORTHCOM. We host a semi-annual conference, which is being held this week, where all members from the counterdrug community within Central and South America, the Caribbean, Mexico and the United States meet at JIATF South to review the efforts, results and lessons learned from the previous six months; then discuss new initiatives and proposals and initiate planning, coordination and synchronization of counterdrug operations for the next six to nine months. As a result of this process, the entire counterdrug community has an opportunity to be heard and understood; their respective efforts orchestrated to best overall effect.

### **Our Transit Zone Challenges**

Maritime surveillance is our number one D&M issue for the near future, although we continue to improve intelligence, predictive analysis and tactical cuing. The air portion of D&M

effort is better as we utilize ROTH, mentioned earlier, to be able to conduct air surveillance over a substantial portion of our JOA at any one time. While we detect a major portion of all air traffic, specifically identifying the drug flights remains a challenge.

### **Detection Shortfalls**

DOD and the interagency and international community have made a tremendous effort to provide the resources we need.

The international community has also worked hard to provide D&M resources and one of the best examples is the Colombian Navy. While having the smallest portion of the Colombian Defense budget, they continue to have the highest seizures rates. Significant Colombian Navy initiatives; they have trained and implemented a “HITRON like” capability to execute warning and disabling fire (daylight only) from their helicopters while at sea; committed a second frigate TACON to JIATF South for short periods; continue to fully support U.S. agencies to develop and maintain a coordinated joint effort along the North Coast; provide highly qualified LNO’s to JIATF South; continue to integrate new interceptor boats into interdiction operations; and they meet regularly with JIATF South to review maritime lessons learned in order to improve interoperability.

### **Trafficker Tactics in the Eastern Pacific**

Looking back in time in the Eastern Pacific (EPAC), the majority of the trafficking movement in 2001 was a fairly straight line between Colombia and the northern portion of Central America / southern Mexico. Since then, as JIATF South continued to refine its business practices and expanded its successes in disrupting cocaine, the traffickers have reacted by moving further south and west. In 2005, we noted that the traffickers are continuing this trend and a good number of multi-ton loads were 1500 to 2000 miles west of South America. This

year we see this trend continue and the traffickers are moving ever deeper into the EPAC. Now we see cocaine-laden mother ships transiting 2000 to 2500 mile west of South America. As the traffickers continually move deeper into the EPAC, they are out-distancing our capabilities to detect, monitor and handoff the event to law enforcement. Compounding the D&M problem is the trafficker's use of other vessels to 'flood the zone'. It is not uncommon to detect several decoy vessels, several more security vessels as well as yet more logistics vessels, all in support of a single trafficking event. The complexity is raised to yet another level in that the roles of each of these vessels may change several times during the event - thus creating an elaborate shell game 'who's got the drugs' over a 4500 mile transit.

We are also noting the traffickers expanded use of semi-submersible vessels. These vessels are designed to ride, when fully loaded, just at and mostly below the ocean surface. The intent of this type of craft is to present as small a visual and radar target as possible to the D&M forces. Finding these conveyances, like go-fast boats, is a real challenge for the command.

### **Traffickers refining their tactics in the Caribbean**

However, to a lesser extent, the traffickers also use the shell game of who has the drugs in the Caribbean. Unlike events in the EPAC, the trafficking events in the Caribbean are much shorter in duration, often over in 20 - 30 hours. The traffickers also demonstrate considerable sophistication in preparation for and execution of the drug run. Recently, while executing regional CNT operations within the northern portion of the western Caribbean, the CBP tracker aircraft under the tactical control of JIATF South detected a go-fast just off the coast of Belize City, about 4:00 am. The go-fast counter detected the CBP tracker and headed towards one of the rivers near Belize City. Belizean Defense Forces, to include their newly established Coast Guard and members of the national drug police, responded to the event. They were unable to

keep the go-fast from entering the river, but were able to seal off the river above and below the suspected location of the go-fast. They did find the go-fast, abandoned in a tributary of the river but the crew and cocaine were gone. What they were able to recover is the electronics that the traffickers left behind in their haste to escape arrest. The electronics included two satellite phones, two global positioning systems (GPS), two power sources - one was a battery pack and the other an inverter (converts AC power to DC) - both of which would provide power to the phones or the GPSs, a pair of the latest generation off the shelf night vision device, a hand gun, and other smaller personal items to include a wallet. Clearly, the phones and the GPSs were used to ensure the trafficker knew where and when to rendezvous. He could communicate independent of long haul radios or cell phone towers. Lastly, the DTO that set up the run could use this equipment to keep the trafficker in the dark as to the route, timings and locations until he was at sea. It is possible the driver of this go-fast had no idea of where he was going until he departed Colombia. Thus, even if we had foreknowledge that the event was going to take place, only maritime patrol aircraft can find this type of event that is becoming a more common occurrence.

#### **What we expect for the remainder of 2006 and the beginning of 2007**

As noted earlier, the traffickers operating in the EPAC and the western Caribbean are making rapid changes to their modus operandi. We are of the opinion that this will continue for the near term as the traffickers are adjusting to our disruption successes of 2005. They too are businessmen and can not continue to sustain the 2005 losses without making alterations. It is important to understand why 2005 was such a watershed year and as a result, the trafficker's radical reaction. The basis of the all-time high record of JIATF South supported disruptions was a collaborative effort through the coordination, integration and synchronization of our

intelligence programs and several long-standing regional operations. Within the Caribbean there were operations CARIB SHIELD and CARIB VENTURE. In the western Caribbean and Central America there were operations CONTRAATAQUE, CENTRAL SKIES, BIRD STRIKE and CORRE CAMINOES. CORRE CAMINOES deserves special mention; it is DEA's regional land centric effort within Central American and Mexico. As this regional operation matures and is integrated with the other long standing air and maritime regional operations, everyone's efforts will be leveraged against the drug trafficker.

## **Closing**

In spite of our challenges we continue to be successful for two primary reasons. First, is Unity of Command - the entire JIATF South team works with a common vision and a common purpose. The second is Unity of Effort. The tremendous caliber of people who dedicate their professional talents to safeguarding America's citizens by interdicting the drug traffickers far from our borders is simply extraordinary. This strategically important endeavor warrants our continued best efforts.